



▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

Saturday/Sunday, 4/28-29/18

“A New Life”

John 3:1-21 (NIV)

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven — the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Family Activity: Begin by reading John 3:1-21 together. As our scripture shows, light and new life go together. Plants and trees and grass need light to grow. Take time this week to head outside and plant flowers or begin to get your garden ready. As you work, here are some questions to discuss.

Discussion Questions:

- What do we as Christians need to grow?
- What has God done in our lives that has given us new life?
- Where have you experienced God lately?

Monday, 4/30/18

“Live Wisely”

Ephesians 5:15 (NIV)

Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise ...

- As Christians, we are called to live intentionally. To be honest, this is probably easier said than done. In reflecting on our scripture for today, how do you feel you would be living wisely and intentionally?
- Part of living wisely is knowing when to say “yes,” when to say “no” and when to say “not yet.” What are you called to say “yes” to right now? How about “no” or “not yet”?

Prayer: Dear God, we celebrate that you have made a way for us to experience new life. Help us to be wise in how we live and reveal to us the ways we can encounter you. Make a way for us to grow in our wisdom each and every day. Amen.

Tuesday, 5/1/18

“Set your Mind”

Colossians 3:1-4 (NIV)

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

- In this letter to the Colossians it says to set your hearts and set your minds on things above. How would you distinguish “things above” from earthly things?
- Many times people feel as though connecting with God happens at church. While I certainly believe that to be true, there are also other ways we can connect with God. Walking in nature, meditation, music, art and many other things can keep us centered. What practices help you to keep your heart and mind focused on God?

Prayer: Glorious God we praise your holy name. We thank you for the abundant life you have given to us. Reveal to us the “things above” so that we can set our hearts and minds on them. Give us the courage to set aside the earthly things that are not producing fruit in our lives. In your son Jesus Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

Wednesday, 5/2/18

“Dead to Sin”

Romans 6:1-4 (NIV)

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

- This scripture speaks multiple times of being “dead to sin.” We think of sin as anything that separates us from God. What is holding you back today from God?

- Last year my car died and I needed to find a “new” used car. My old vehicle was 16 years old so I was quite excited to see all of the technological advances that I now could take advantage of. My excitement lasted a while, but as with anything new, it eventually faded away. It is easy to get used to the new norm and forget the way life used to be. The truth is that this new life that we are offered through Jesus Christ is something that we can unfortunately forget. It is easy for us to be excited when we first experience God, but quickly go back to our status quo. What was your life like before you knew God? How did your life change because of God? What new life does God have for you today? What new life is God asking for you to remember and hold on to?

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for the new life you have called us into. Help us to regain the excitement of the moment we accepted you. Fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we may be overcome with your joy. As you have blessed us, help us to bless others. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Thursday, 5/3/18

“United with Christ”

Romans 6:5-14 (NIV)

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

- It is just about time to think about planting for spring, if you haven’t already started. One of the fascinating parts of gardening is experiencing firsthand the circle of life. In most cases the death or dormancy of a plant isn’t the end. This part of the cycle makes room for seeds that will become new plants, or new growth. In this letter to the Romans we hear that we are united with Christ in death. We know this death isn’t the end of the story, however, and we then are united with Christ in the resurrection. What new life have you been able to experience as the result of something ending or “dying”?
- This scripture speaks multiple times of not allowing sin to be our master. This idea of a “master” comes from a time when households would have had not only many generations, but may also have servants or even slaves. Each household would have had only one “master” who would have had control. When we think of sin in this way, it can take a new meaning. What do you see being the “master” of people’s lives in our culture? What do you feel has the most control over your life today? How would being united with Christ change this?

Prayer: God of grace and mercy, we praise you for the wonderful plans you have for us. Thank you for the precious gift of resurrection and the assurance that we are united with Christ in eternal life. We confess that we still have things that keep us separated from you and we lay those things before you now. Help us to live our lives freed from sin, with our eyes focused on you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Friday, 5/4/18

“Reconciliation”

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (NIV)

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- In this letter to the Corinthians, Paul says that from now on we do not regard others from a worldly point of view or count people's sins. What characteristics would you consider to be worldly? What characteristics do you consider to be Christ-like? How have you struggled to not count other's sins lately?
- Through Christ we have been given the gift of being reconciled to God. This means that sin no longer can separate us from God. Through Christ we are also given the ministry of reconciliation. How have you been able to celebrate reconciliation recently? In what situation in your life do you see the opportunity for reconciliation?

Prayer: Holy God, we praise for your restorative power. We are so grateful for the new life you have given to us through Jesus Christ. Help us to see where we can bring your message of restoration and strengthen us in our ministry of reconciliation. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit we pray, Amen.

**This week's devotional was written by Pastor Jessica Richard
(jrichard@plattewoodschurch.org).**